

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL COAST AND LOS ANGELES
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARDS (REGIONAL BOARDS)
IRRIGATED LANDS WAIVER PROGRAM STATUS REPORT**

Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board:

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board enrollment deadline for the Irrigated Lands Conditional Waiver Program was January 1, 2005. Approximately 1300 individual ranches have enrolled, representing approximately 236,000 acres throughout the Central Coast Region. This represents nearly 55% of the estimated 434,000 irrigated acres (about 50% of the Region's 2500 growers) and is in accordance with Regional Board staff's target of 50% initial enrollment. This figure does not include growers that used the electronic website filing system.

Over 200 people enrolled using the on-line system. Regional Board Non-Point Source Program staff participated in numerous technical assistance and conditional waiver program enrollment workshops prior to the enrollment deadline. Although the usage of the electronic enrollment system represented only 8% of potential enrollees, the on-line system provides a valuable tool for managing large quantities of data submitted by growers. All hard copy enrollment forms are being entered into the system manually. In the near future, enrollees will be able to access and update their information, and submit annual reports and biannual checklists electronically.

Regional Board staff responded to more than 600 conditional waiver program-related phone calls and emails, answering questions about conditional waiver requirements, the enrollment process, and the on-line enrollment system. Staff also conducted a mass mailing of 2500 flyers to inform the agricultural community of the new requirements. The agricultural industry throughout the region did a tremendous amount of outreach, conducting more than thirty workshops to assist farmers in completing farm plans and enrollment forms. Several groups did large mailings to their members, providing information on the conditional waiver, and enrollment forms.

Enrollment forms are still being submitted to the Regional Board. Staff will continue their outreach efforts with the long-term goal of 80% enrollment by January 1, 2006 (the first year). In the near future, Regional Board staff will also begin pursuing enforcement actions against non-filers, as necessary.

Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board:

Los Angeles Regional Board staff has been developing a Conditional Waiver for Irrigated Lands, including:

- A draft tentative order,
- Two draft monitoring and reporting programs – one for Individuals Dischargers and one for Group Dischargers,

- An Initial Study and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) checklist.

Additional drafts of documents to support the conditional waiver have also been developed and include:

- Notices of Intent (NOIs),
- Receiving surface water limitations, and
- A list of surface waters.

All draft documents have been developed in collaboration with local agricultural and environmental stakeholders over an eight-month time period. A series of five meetings were held in which stakeholders reviewed and commented on the drafts of the conditional waiver documents. These meetings have resulted in revisions that reflect the unique conditions of agriculture, the regulatory framework, and the environmental priorities in the Los Angeles Region.

In addition to participating in the development of the draft Conditional Waiver documents, stakeholders have participated by informing the grower community in Ventura County of the proposed Conditional Waiver. The draft Conditional Waiver was presented to the agricultural community at a meeting sponsored by the Farm Bureau of Ventura County in December 2004. Approximately 200 growers attended the meeting.

Los Angeles Water Board staff is finalizing the draft orders, pending final legal review. A public Regional Board Workshop is proposed to take place later in 2005.

Below is further background information on Irrigated Lands in the Los Angeles Region:

- Ventura County is among the top ten agricultural producers in California with a gross value of over \$1054 million for 2004 (6 other counties are in Central Valley Region and one county in the Central Coast Region. California exceeds all other states.)
- Average acreage per owner is comparable but smaller at 50 acres (67 acres/grower, Central Valley Region has 93 acres/grower, Central Coast Region has 240 acres/grower)
- Total acreage is smaller at 263,000 acres, but return on investment per acre is higher than Region 5 (As per California Farm Bureau, annual gross per acreage is \$ 4000 in Los Angeles Region and \$3800 in the Central Valley Region.)
- The number and turnover of crop types is large in the Los Angeles Region due to the large number of nurseries, truck farms and small acreage use.
- Agriculture has developed a collaborative culture because of extensive utilization of land adjacent to urban centers. An example is that 1000 acres of nurseries within the Los Angeles County line on power line right of way. The result is a community of growers with leadership and experience in successful remediation of water quality problems and the infrastructure to change practices when necessary. Examples are the Ventura County Farm Bureau-led program for white fly eradication and management practice modification for Malathion pesticide application.